

(2) THE ⁴⁸⁸⁷
CHURCH's Danger,
AND THE
MINISTER's Duty

Declared, in a

SERMON

Preach'd at the Opening of the

Synod of *Angus* and *Mearns*,

At *MONTROSE*,

The 16th Day of *October* 1733.

WITH A
PREFACE and POSTSCRIPT,

TOUCHING
Some more *Evils* of the present TIME.

By Mr. JOHN WILLISON Minister of the
Gospel in *DUNDEE*.

EDINBURGH,

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The 10th Day of October 1733

WITH A

PREFACE and POSTSCRIPT

TOUCHING

Some more Books of the present Time

By Mr. John Wilson Minister of the

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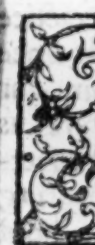
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*An additional Testimony against the
Evils of the Time.*



Have published the following Sermon, to shew to the World my Concern for the *Church of Scotland* and her *Covenanted Reformation*, to promote what I can her Credit and Prosperity, and to testify against what I judge reproach-

ful and prejudicial to her. I have added some Things from my Papers, which I omitted in the Delivery for Want of Time ; and here I shall add some Things more, for exonerating and explaining myself more fully upon the said Subject.

Seeing it is the Power of Conscience that obliges me to make this Appearance, I beg that no Man may think I affect Popularity in it, or that I incline to make an Appeal to the People about Controversies which fall in among Ministers : That was never my Way ; and far less am I for bringing in such Debates upon sacramental Occasions, which ought to be Love-feasts among Christians. But, in my humble Opinion, it is

not an improper Occasion for the *Moderator* of a Synod in his Sermon at the Opening thereof, which is *concio ad clerum*, to address his Brethern concerning the Controversies or Defections of the Time, especially if he see his Mother-Church in extreme Danger thereby: For, what dutiful Son can be silent at such a Time? seeing it is the proper Business of a Synod, both to provide Remedies themselves, and to address the General Assembly to do it when they are at a Loss.

Object. It is not proper to handle these before the People.

Ans. 1. This hath been the constant Practice of *Moderators* at the Opening of Synods since our Blessed Reformation, as appears from our Church-histories. 2. Frequently there are as many of the People attending the Synod's Meetings, whom we cannot prevent, as are hearing the Sermon; and so, if this Argument hold good, we should not at all open our Mouths anent any of the Defections of the Time: And we know, Silence in Watchmen is highly condemned by the Word of God.

Object. Is it not said of a dangerous and declining Time, Amos v. 13. Therefore the Prudent shall keep Silence at that Time, for it is an evil Time?

Ans. No doubt some Ministers make Use of that Scripture to prevent Trouble to themselves, and it hath been cast up to my Thoughts also: But, in my Opinion, that Text doth not point at *Prophets*, but other *private* Men, whose private Capacity allows them to keep Silence when others must speak. For *Prophets* are required to cry aloud, and not spare; and these who do

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not, are called *dumb Dogs*, Isa. lvi. 10. Isa. lviii. 1. I grant indeed, there is a *Time to keep Silence*, as well as a *Time to speak*, Eccl. iii. 7. And the *Prudent* will wisely observe these Times ; and, even when the Time cometh that they are called to speak of Faults, the *Prudent* will mind to do it in a decent Manner, especially if Superiors be concerned. If any think I have not so well observed this Rule myself, it is what I cannot help, seeing I have aimed to do it the best Way I could : And I do here further declare, that I am loth to give Offence to any Man ; my sincere Design being, not to cast Reproach upon any of my Brethren, but to avert and prevent the Reproach of my Mother-Church, and to promote her Welfare according to my bound Duty.

I never inclined to expose my Brethren, but rather to cover their Mistakes, and speak charitably of every one ; for which I have been oftentimes blamed by some : But I far rather err upon that Side than upon the other, seeing I myself am so liable to Faults and Mistakes. I never loved the Character of an *Incendiary*, to blow the Coal in smaller Differences, or to aggravate the wrong Steps of others ; but always preferred the Character of a *Peace-maker*, to compose Matters, and reconcile Parties as much as possible ; in which also I have been blamed, as making too great Concessions for that End.

Notwithstanding of all the Complaints of Desertion, I acknowledge there are still in the Church, many worthy, learned and pious Men in the Ministry, whom I honour, and from whom I would be willing to learn, and whom I pray God

God may long continue in the Church as a Bulwark, under God, against the Evils of Corruption and Defection which threaten her; and that he may raise up a young Sett to fill their Room, when they are called off the Stage. But at the same Time I cannot conceal the dismal Apprehensions which many Welwishers of our Zion have of her Danger, from the View they have of many of the present young Clergy and Preachers, who seem to affect a *new Way of moral Preaching* and *lax Management*, suited to the Taste of many Patrons and Heritors; greedily snatch at Presentations, and concur to get themselves thrust into Churches against the Inclinations both of the Presbyteries and the People immediately concerned; which dangerous Course is still continued, notwithstanding of the awful Rebukes given by the Providence of God to several engaged therein.

Besides what I have said in the Sermon of the Evil of this Practice of voluntary courting and accepting Presentations, without any Necessity for it; Let me here add, That I look upon it as the main Spring of all our present Distress: For, as it brought on violent Settlements, and melancholly Divisions in Parishes and Presbyteries; so it gave Rise to the making of these Acts by Assembly 1732, and Assembly 1733, which at present occasion so great Uneasiness in this Church, and may issue in a most destructive Rupture, if God in his Mercy prevent not. For many Years this pernicious Practice was bogled at, as contrary to Presbyterian Principles, and the Interest of the Church; till some principal Persons in this Church, who ought to have been

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Guardians of her Peace and Liberties, from selfish Principles, most ingloriously broke the Ice to it, about the Year 1727, and by their Example and Countenance drew many others into it; whence it is easy to see at whose Door the Miseries of this Church are to be laid.

Obj. Our famous Presbyterian Ministers in ancient Times accepted of Presentations, and were settled this Way.

Ans. Many are grievously imposed upon by this Objection, through their not knowing their different Situation from ours: For, 1. Our worthy Ancestors were but then reforming, and had never been delivered from the Yoke of Patronages, under which they groined: But, had they been delivered, as we have been, they would never have voluntarily yielded to the wreathing of that Yoke about their Necks again, as many of us have done, by courting and accepting of the Patrons Presentations, when they were under no Necessity from the Law to do it.

2. In our Ancestors Times no Man could have Access to a Church without the Patron's Allowance; but, as the Law now stands, all among us may be settled without owning Patrons at all, if they will have but a little Patience: Seeing the Legisslator hath been so indulging as to enact, *That, if the Patron's Presentation be not accepted within Six Months after the Vacancy, the Power of Planting the Church falls into the Hands of the Presbytery.*

3. Our zealous Ancestors gave no Countenance to Patronages, but what they were driven to by their Situation with the Law; they would not, for mean Ends, have gone into voluntar and un-

unnecessary Accepting of Presentations, as many of us do: But seeing, as the Law then stood, there was no Access to Churches without the Patron's Allowance, they behoved to submit to Settlements in these Churches to which the Patrons were pleased to present them; and this they did not till they had the Consent of the People, and Concurrence of the Presbyteries concerned.

4. Our reforming Ancestors still looked upon Patronages as a Grievance and Yoke, and from Time to Time applied the Legislator to get it removed, which at length they got done *Anno* 1649. But many of us are so far from looking on it as a Grievance, that they wilfully bring the Yoke upon the Church, by their officious Courting and Accepting of Presentations, after we were in Effect delivered by the Legislator *Anno* 1719: Thus preferring Bondage to Liberty, a Patron's Presentation to a Congregation's Call, which our pious Ancestors would never have done. So that our modern Accepters cannot skreen their Shame by their Practice, the Cases being so widely different.

But supposing all were true, which some allege, concerning the Practice of some ancient Presbyterians, while in their reforming State from Popish Corruptions and Abuses; What Folly, or rather Impiety, must it be in some to be at Pains to search out all their Infirmities, Weaknesses, Defects and Imperfections (which are owned to be such by themselves) in order to copy after them, especially when we are under no Manner of Necessity to do it from the Legislator? What! are they wearied of Liberty and Purity?

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Would they have the Church reduced to her Infant and more imperfect State again? Do they prefer that to a State of greater Purity and Perfection, which we might still maintain if we were inclined to it, seeing the Legislator hath been so indulging, as to leave the Matter at our own Choice? Good Lord, deliver us from such Inflation.

The Synods of *Angus, Aberdeen* and *Perth*, within these two Years past, have emitted *Warnings* in strong Terms against this woful officious Practice, which hath been the *Origine* of so much Trouble to this Church: I wish they were seconded in this noble Attempt by other Synods, or by the Assembly or Commission; which thro' the Lord's Blessing might prove an excellent Mean to stem the Tide of Corruption, which otherwise is like to flow in upon us. O that the Lord, who hath all Mens Hearts into his Hand, may incline and determine them to it!

When I speak against *Presentations* or *Encroachments* upon our Rights and Liberties, I have no Design to shew any Contempt of my Superiors or their Authority, whether in their Civil or Ecclesiastick Courts; but desire to shew all due Regard to the same, and to be thankful to them for the peaceable Exercise of my Ministry, without any sinful Term of Communion, or Imposition on my Conscience; as also, to bless God for the valuable Blessings and Privileges we still enjoy above other Nations and Churches: But at the same Time I must own, that the Consideration of these Mercies should not make me or others easy about any Appearance of Defection or Corruption in the Clergy, which, if con-

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nived at, may soon bring us to as melancholly a Condition as other Churches.

I honour our *supreme Judicatories*, and would desire to support their Authority, and fall in with their *Acts* and *Decisions* as far as possibly I can : But as we must own, with our *Confession of Faith*, there is none of them infallible ; so we cannot be bound to give implicate Faith to all their *Determinations* ; nay, when we judge them wrong, we may warrantably reclaim, and address to have them rectified, especially if it be in a Matter of great Moment, tho' still I own this ought to be done in the most decent and dutiful Manner.

I am heartily sorry that *Instructions*, *Representations* and *Addresses*, from *Presbyteries*, *Synods*, and *Bodies* of Ministers, concerning *Grievances*, have of late Years been so disregarded by our Assemblies ; and that *Dissents* and *Protestations* by particular Ministers are not allowed nor recorded. This Entertainment doth put Ministers to think of other Ways to exoner their Minds. And, upon that Account, I do find myself obliged to ease my Thoughts in this Way concerning the *Evils* and *Declinings* of the present Time, lest they should be imputable to me (as a Member of the incorporated Body) thro' my Connivance or Silence. And tho' my Testimony be of small Value, yet seeing I have been long in the Ministry, and know not how soon I may be called to put off this Tabernacle, and to give Account of my Stewardship (the Lord prepare me for that Time, and for the Trials which may abide me before it) I do, in Imitation of some of our worthy Predecessors, leave
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this Declaration of my Mind behind me, that neither the present nor succeeding Age may be imposed upon, as to my Sentiments of the Evils of the present Time. Wherefore, besides what I have said before, and afterwards in my Sermon, I here bear my Testimony against the *Atheism, Infidelity, Immorality and Looseness* of the Age; against all *Popish, Socinian, Arian, Arminian* and *Antinomian* Errors in Doctrine; against all *Superstition* and human *Inventions* in Worship; against both *Prelacy* and *Independency* in Church-Government; against all *Simoniackal* Pactions, officious Courting of Patrons, and Accepting of their Presentations; against all spiritual Oppression and Persecution, and Encroachments upon the Rights and Liberties of this Church: As also, against all Thrusting and violent Imposing of Ministers upon Christian Congregations; and against all publick Acts and Deeds which favour or promote this imposing Course: And likewise, against all Proceedings or Designs to silence or cast out worthy and useful Ministers for remonstrating against such violent Settlements, or the Acts which authorize and encourage the same, or for refusing to exclude serious Christians from sealing Ordinances, who are chargeable with no greater Fault than Want of Freedom to own their Relation to such Pastors as are violently thrust in upon them: Surely there is something grosser required to excommunicate good Christians, and to depose or cast out good Ministers, than such Things; And I hope we shall see it, when the God of Peace doth incline us calmly to think and deliberate thereupon.

As for the Act of Assembly 1732, about which there is so much Noise, I was at the Assembly in May 1731, when it began; and, I confess, when the Overture was in *Embryo*, I carried favourably towards it, tho' I was not present in the Assembly when it came in to be reasoned upon and voted, being called Home by Express before that Time. And that which inclined me to favour the Proposal at the first, was the great Love I had to the Peace and Safety of my Mother-Church, which I then saw to be endangered by the Patronages, and the violent Settlements begun to be made in Consequence thereof; for I was told by some leading Men (whom I thought I might trust) That there was no Way to deliver us from these Evils, but by our agreeing among ourselves upon some *Rule* for planting Churches, which we might lay before the Civil Government, and get substituted in the Room of the Patronage-Act; and that some of our great Men gave Encouragement to expect this. I was then fixed upon no particular Rule, but I had favourable Thoughts of the Act of Parliament 1690, which at first was proposed to be the Rule; and, in order thereto, it was thought necessary to transmit the same to the Presbyteries by Way of Overture, that they might consider it, and thereby it would be known how far we could agree about it. This seem'd to be pretty plausible; for the Notion I always had of the Plan of settling Churches according to the Act 1690, was, That the Heritors and Elders were to chuse a Minister with Consent of the Congregation; and, when there arose any Difference about the Choice, the Case was brought to the Presbytery to be cognosced

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ced upon by them, they being impowered to judge what was most for Edification, whether to proceed to settle the Man that seemed to have most of the legal Votes, or to lay him aside, in case others, with the Body of the People, continued dissatisfied, and appoint a new Moderation: And sometimes they did the one, and sometimes the other, as they judged most for Edification; for the Good and Edification of the Parish, was the great Rule the Judicatories then kept in their Eye in their Determinations, which commonly had a comfortable Issue. I am sure this was the Sense the Church put upon the Act 1690, and proceeded accordingly in settling of Churches for Twenty two Years after it was made, and had much Peace and Tranquillity in following that Method. As long as I thought the Design was to keep Things upon this Footing, I was easy, the Matter not being great who had the Liberty of voting, providing Matters were so managed, that no Man should be thrust in upon a Congregation against their Will: But, as soon as I perceived the Design was to carry the Affair of Settlements beyond the Act 1690, I told my Mind freely in the Presbytery, and proposed an Amendment of the Overture, to prevent any such Design, which they were pleased to receive and send over among their Instructions to the Assembly 1732; which, I am sorry, they did not think fit to notice. And now, when I compare the two Acts together, I find indeed there is a great Difference: For, 1mo, By the Act 1690, the Heritors and Elders are only impowered to *name* and *propose* a Person to the whole Congregation; But, by the Act 1732, the Heritors

tors and Elders are impowered to *elect* and *call* One to be Minister of the Parish. 2^{do}, According to the Act 1690, the Election was not to be looked upon as *finished*, till the Man was proposed to the Congregation, and their Approbation obtained; and, in case this was refused, the Nomination and Proposal was to stop, and be laid as an incomplete *unfinished* Affair before the Presbytery, that they might give their Judgment whether to proceed any further in it or not: But, according to Act 1732, after the Heritors and Elders have voted, the Election is said to be *finished*, whether the Congregation approve or not; Nay, the Man is reckoned legally *elect*ed and *called* to be Minister of the Parish, before any Notice is taken of the Congregation, or the Matter at all proposed to them. 3^{tio}, According to the Act 1690, and the Sense which went to be put upon it, if the Body of the Heads of Families did object against the Man named by the Majority of Heritors and Elders, and say he had not an edifying Gift, or that it was not suited to their Capacities, and that they had not Freedom in their Consciences to consent to his being their Minister; the Presbytery judged such Objections, made by a knowing well-disposed People, sufficient to stop the Affair, and to proceed to a new Election. All this will appear from our Records, and from the Nature and Strain of the Calls given in those Days. But, according to the Act 1732, and the Sense now put upon it, let Heads of Families object what they will against the Election, if they be not able to prove Error or Immorality against the Man by two Witnesses, they must receive him as their Pastor, and so the Body of the Congregation

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Congregation have no greater Power or Influence in the Settlement, than these who dwell in another Nation. Yea, according to this Act, as it is now sens'd, Parishes may be settled, and sometimes are, by a Majority of non-residing and disaffected Heritors, where the whole Elders and People do reclaim and protest against the Settlement: And surely such Settlements, as they are against Scripture-rules, so they are a sad Hindrance and Stop to the Advancement of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and cannot but be most grievous to all who are zealous for his Glory, and who make Conscience of praying, as he directs, *Thy Kingdom come: Gird thy Sword upon thy Thigh, O most Mighty; and in thy Majesty ride prosperously.* Upon which Account, I do with the greatest Humility and Earnestness beseech and obtest the Reverend and Honourable Members of the next Assembly, to give at least an Explication of this Act, declaring, That it is not the Meaning of it to impose Ministers upon Congregations, where the Eldership and Body of the People do reclaim, nor to contradict our Books of Discipline and ancient Acts of Assembly, as the Assembly 1586, 1596, 1638, 1649, &c. And, I would beg (if I could do it with Tears of Blood) that they would not make any such Act as this an Engine of Trouble and Persecution in the Church, seeing no Man pleads that it is founded upon the Word of God, but only that it is devised as a proper Expedient till the Church be delivered from Patronages. And, about what Acts of the Church may Ministers have Liberty to speak their Minds so freely, as about

tors and Elders are impowered to *elect* and *call* One to be Minister of the Parish. *2do*, According to the Act 1690, the Election was not to be looked upon as *finished*, till the Man was proposed to the Congregation, and their Approbation obtained; and, in case this was refused, the Nomination and Proposal was to stop, and be laid as an incomplete *unfinished* Affair before the Presbytery, that they might give their Judgment whether to proceed any further in it or not: But, according to Act 1732, after the Heritors and Elders have voted, the Election is said to be *finished*, whether the Congregation approve or not; Nay, the Man is reckoned legally *elected* and *called* to be Minister of the Parish, before any Notice is taken of the Congregation, or the Matter at all proposed to them. *3tio*, According to the Act 1690, and the Sense which went to be put upon it, if the Body of the Heads of Families did object against the Man named by the Majority of Heritors and Elders, and say he had not an edifying Gift, or that it was not suited to their Capacities, and that they had not Freedom in their Consciences to consent to his being their Minister; the Presbytery judged such Objections, made by a knowing well-disposed People, sufficient to stop the Affair, and to proceed to a new Election. All this will appear from our Records, and from the Nature and Strain of the Calls given in those Days. But, according to the Act 1732, and the Sense now put upon it, let Heads of Families object what they will against the Election, if they be not able to prove Error or Immorality against the Man by two Witnesses, they must receive him as their Pastor, and so the Body of the Congregation

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about these which are owned to be merely human Constitutions?

Object. If Ministers be dissatisfied with the Acts and Constitutions of the Church, they should withdraw from her, and give up their legal Privileges.

Ans. 1. Tho' this be the common Talk of some, there is no Warrant for this Course in the Word of God; for the Scripture directs us, when we see Things wrong in the Church, to *plead with our Mother*, but not to disown her forthwith, or renounce Communion with her.

2. These who talk so now, would be most ready to accuse Ministers, if they did withdraw, of making a Schism and Separation without just Cause. What! would they say, "Is the Church so heretical, that they will not hold Communion with her? Are such small Mistakes just Grounds of Separation? Why did they not protest against what they judged wrong, and continue still within the Church, as severals of our brave Ancestors did in former Ages?"

Object. They may plead with their Mother, but must not spit in her Face.

Ans. 1. I am indeed for a decent and respectful Way of pleading with our Mother.

2. If some good Men shall use a rougher Way of dealing than others in testifying against what is wrong, it ought not to be termed a Spitting in their Mother's Face, nor made a Ground of severe Censure. If our Ancestors in former Ages had been so narrow and rigid in their Way of thinking, what had become of Masters *Knox, Craig, Davidson, Welsh, Bruce*, the Two *Melwils*, and many others?

Object.

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Object. The Church's Acts must be obeyed, her Sentences execute, and the Fence of her Authority maintained; otherwise she cannot be preserved from the greatest Errors and Disorders. We must not see the Authority of the General Assembly ruined.

Ans. 1. As for my own Part, I was always for maintaining the Authority of the General Assembly as sacred and inviolable, seeing it is of so great Consequence to the preserving of Peace and Unity in this Church; I have been sorry to see it attacked, or rudely used. But, if we would truly preserve it, let us be tender of it, in the making of Acts or Decisions; being careful that either they be evidently founded upon the Word of God, or that there be nothing in them contrary thereunto.

2. When any Rule is transgressed which hath nothing but Church-authority to support it, Church-censures should be sparingly used, seeing Rigor in that Case doth ruine Authority more than maintain it. We do not read of any Church destroyed by her Lenity and Forbearance in such Cases: tho' severals have been ruined by screwing up Authority too high. We may see by long Experience, that severe Dealing is not the Way of convincing Men of Conscience and Zeal of their Mistakes: And, by the Way, it is a little surprizing to see some, whose Discourses breathed forth nothing but Moderation, Peace, Charity and Benevolence toward their Fellow-Creatures, all of a sudden metamorphosed in their Tempers, and breathing forth Rigor, Severity, Persecution and bitter Speeches against their Brethren who differ from them but a little

in their Way of thinking. Ah! what poor changeable Creatures are we!

3. If we would have the Assembly's Authority maintained, we must take Care in making Acts of general Concern, that none of the Church's *Fences* or *guardian Rules* be broke through, such as that excellent one, *Act 9. Assen. 1697*, in which, "For the Safety of the
" Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Govern-
" ment of this Church, it is appointed, en-
" acted and declared, That, before any General
" Assembly of this Church shall pass any Acts
" which are to be binding Rules and Constituti-
" ons to the Church," the same Acts be first
" proposed as Overtures to the Assembly, and,
" being by them past as such, be remitted to the
" Consideration of the several Presbyteries of this
" Church, and their Opinions and Consent re-
" ported by their Commissioners to the next
" Assembly, who may then pass the same in
" Acts, if the *more general Opinion* (N. B.) of
" *the Church*, thus had, agree thereunto." Now,
this *guardian Act* hath been in Force these Thirty
six Years, and hath been regarded as a *fun-
damental Rule* and *Bulwark* of our happy Con-
stitution; and, if it be broke through in the ma-
king of any Act or Rule, how can we expect
that such an Act will be regarded as a binding
Rule and Constitution to the Church, legally
enacted? And this seems to be the Case with
respect to *Act 1732*; for, of Forty nine Presby-
teries who gave their Opinions concerning it,
there were no more than Six Presbyteries in all
Scotland for it. Some of them indeed were for
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it with Amendments, but generally these would have alter'd the Nature of it very much from what it is, had they been gone into.

4. In all Ages the wisest States and Governments have in many Cases thought fit to relax their Authority in censuring the Disobedient; and this hath been so far from ruining their Authority, that it hath contributed to preserve and establish it. How many of the Ministers of *Scotland* were guilty of Disobedience to the Assembly 1606 at *Linlithgow*, who appointed them to accept of constant Moderations; and to the Assembly 1618, who appointed them to receive the *Five Articles of Perth*? Did ever the Church carry the Matter so far, as to suspend or depose any of the disobedient Brethren? Or, was the Authority of the General Assembly ruin'd by such Connivance? Have we not seen many General Assemblies since that Time highly regarded, and their Authority in a flourishing Condition?

After all, I humbly beg, that none may be offended with my Freedom in handling these Matters, seeing Conscience hath moved me to it, for the Safety of my Mother-Church, which I stand engaged by the strongest Ties to promote, and which at this Juncture I take to be in extreme Danger; and in such Cases *omnis homo est miles*.

I wish also, for the Safety and Quiet of the Church, that the *Dissents* and *Protestations* of Members in Judicatories were allowed to be recorded, with their Reasons. And I see not why this might not be allowed under proper Regulations in our supreme Ecclesiastick Judicatories,

as well as in the *House of Peers* of Great Britain. Why should we think it a greater Affront to our Authority, than they do to theirs? Or, do we pretend to Infallibility more than they?

Likewise, it would add to the Church's Safety, that both the Number and Qualifications of *Ruling Elders* allowed to sit in Assemblies and Commissions were better regulated, and more narrowly canvassed. And many are of Opinion, that the *Expediency* of *Ruling Elders* from Burghs should of new be taken into serious Consideration.

And I am sure it is not much for our Safety; that National and Provincial Fasts are so much neglected, when Providence so loudly calls us to the Work of Humiliation and Prayer; when Sin is arriving to so great a Height, when Clouds of Wrath are gathering so fast, when all *Europe* is threatned with Blood and Confusion, and when destructive Divisions and Schisms are ready to break out among us at Home: And O do not these frightful Appearances proclaim it to be a proper Season for us to meet, and fast and mourn, and see if we can weep our Hearts into one Lump, and by our united Prayers prevail with God, for Christ's Sake, to spare his People, and not give his Heritage to Reproach; or else, that he will prepare us to meet him, when coming in the Way of his Judgments? And, if Judgment begin at the House of God, what shall be the End of these that obey not the Gospel? O that God in his Mercy may awaken us in Time to think upon these Things! Amen.



A

S E R M O N

On JOEL ii. 17.

Let the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord, weep between the Porch and the Altar, and let them say, Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thine Heritage to Reproach; that the Heathen should rule over them: Wherefore should they say among the People, Where is their God?



AT this Time Twenty one Years ago (*viz.* October 1712.) I opened the Synod, by a Sermon on 1 Sam. iv. 13. concerning *El's Heart trembling for the Ark of God.* Many of the Members of the Synod are removed by Death

since that Time, but these who survive, may remember, it was a very threatening Time to this Church; yet it pleased our gracious God to save her

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her from the Storm then impending, and allow her many Halcyon Days since, tho', alas! badly improvén: Wherefore the Clouds seem to gather again, and look very black; and a new Storm from another Airth (if God prevent not) is ready to blow. I have chosen therefore this Text, which calls us for more than *trembling* Hearts for the Ark, even *weeping* Eyes, and *praying* Lips also: And O that all these might meet in us at this Time!

In *Joel's* Time, the Church and People of God were threatned with a desolating Judgment; to prevent it, he calls them to publick National Fasting and Humiliation, Duties most proper for a People exposed to publick National Calamities. In the Text we have Directions given to Ministers for carrying on this Work; In which let us

Observe, 1. The Persons address'd, the *Priests* or *Ministers* of God: Why? Because they, who were the Peoples Mouth to God upon other Occasions, were especially called at this Time to stand in the Gap, to turn away God's Wrath from the Church. Tho' others are not excoemed from this Duty, yet it is the Business of Ministers in a special Manner, *Joel* i. 13. *Ly all Night in Sackcloth, ye Ministers of my God.* When others mourn in the Day, it is your Duty to mourn both Night and Day.

2. Observe the Place where they are to mourn and wrestle; *Between the Porch and the Altar*, i. e. the stately Porch built by *Solomon*, and the great Brasen Altar, the publick Place where they used to attend the Offering of Sacrifices; there they are to pour out their Tears and Prayers in

View

View of all the People, that, by the Minister's Example, the People may be affected and wrought into the like pious Disposition.

3. Observe the Words the Ministers are directed to use and enlarge upon in their Prayers to God ; *Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thine Heritage to Reproach, &c.* In which there are several strong Arguments used to prevail with God for the Church ;

1st, They are to cry, *Spare, O Lord* : q. d.

" We confess our Guilt and Ill-deservings ; we
" acknowledge the Justice of thy Proceedings,
" tho' we should be cut off ; all our Relief is in
" thy sparing Mercy, and this we humbly look
" up to, and plead for, with a merciful God."

2^{dly}, Another Plea is taken from the Relation they stood in unto God ; *We are thy People, thine Heritage* : q. d. " We are the People thou
" hast set thy Love upon, separated for thy
" Church, taken into Covenant with thee, ransomed from *Egyptian* Bondage, delivered
" from many Enemies and Dangers, and preserved from Ruin by a Train of miraculous Pro-
" vidences ; Lord, spare the Inheritance thou
" hast purchased for thyself at so dear a Rate."

3^{dly}, They are to plead the Reproach and Contempt which would fall upon the Church and People of God, if God give up with them ; *Give not thine Heritage to Reproach* : q. d.

" If thou send a Famine upon us (which was
" the Judgment immediately threatned) then
" the fruitful Land of *Canaan*, the Glory of all
" Lands, shall be reproached as a poor beggarly
" and barren Land, insufficient to afford Sacrifices for the Temple ; yea, we shall soon fall
" under

View

“ under the Reproach of Servitude to our Hea-
 “ then Neighbours, who will make an easy
 “ Prey of us (if once we be famished) and de-
 “ prive us both of our Civil and Spiritual Li-
 “ berties, and especially of God’s Ordinances, the
 “ Symbols of his Presence, and Means of Com-
 “ munion with him ; which we value as our
 “ great Honour and Happiness above other Na-
 “ tions.” *Lastly*, They are to plead in Prayer,
 that the Reproach of the Church will some
 way reflect upon her God and Protector ; *Where-*
fore should they say among the People, Where is
their God ? q. d. “ These barbarous People,
 “ who watch for our Halting, will not consider
 “ our Sins and Ill-deservings at God’s Hand,
 “ but will talk reproachfully of God, *saying*,
 “ Where is the God they trusted in, the God of
 “ whose Power, Mercy and Faithfulness they
 “ boasted so much ? *They will say*, He is either
 “ weak and could not help them in their Ex-
 “ tremity, or unkind and would not : Lord,
 “ spare and pity thy Church, for thy Name,
 “ thy Glory’s Sake. The Matter of our Re-
 “ proach is not so great ; But, Lord, *What wilt*
 “ *thou do for thy great Name ?*”

DOCT. *In Time of the Church’s Danger,*
Ministers are especially called to mourn,
plead and wrestle with God for her, that
she may not be abandoned or given up to
Reproach.

In prosecuting this Subject, I propose to shew,
 1st, When it may be said, that a Church is left
 or given up to Reproach.

2^{dly};

2dly, Why Ministers should be so earnest with God to prevent this Calamity.

3dly, Make Improvement suitable to the Case of this Church.

I. The *first* Head is, To shew when a Church may be said to be left or given up to Reprach and Contempt.

And here I shall mention several reproachful and Church-exposing Evils, which Ministers ought mournfully and fervently to deprecate, especially when a Church is threatned with them.

As,

1mo, When a Church falls into a *backsliding Condition*, Religion in her is under a visible Decay, her Members leave their first Love, degenerate from their Predecessors Piety and Zeal, turn loose and indifferent about God's Truths, their former declared Principles, and the solemn Engagements they ly under to maintain them; And not only so, but turn careless also about the Practice and Duties of Religion, such as Family-Worship, secret Prayer, Sabbath-Sanctification, and Gospel-holiness: When People lose their former Spirituality and Liveliness in God's Service, and their Duties dwindle away into a dead Formality: When they content themselves with external Ordinances and Communion, without Communion with God in them: When they turn carnal in their Conversation; Christian Love declines, Malice, Hatred and Envy do increase: Then it is, that a Church is left and given up to Reproach; these are Church-digracing Evils, which Ministers should earnestly deprecate, and cry, *Spare. &c.*

2do, When destructive *Schisms and Divisions* invade a Church, so that good Men, both Ministers and Professors of Religion, entertain harsh Thoughts, and break out into uncharitable Reflections, and severe Censures one against another, and will not use Lenity or Forbearance to them who differ from them in some lesser Things. These are Evils we should earnestly pray against, seeing they manifestly tend to expose and ruine a Church; for they put a Stop to the Progress of the Gospel, the Conversion of Souls, and inbringing of Strangers to Christ: They hinder the sweet Fellowship of Christians together, and their mutual Prayers with and for one another; and open a Flood-gate for innumerable other Evils: As for Instance, They take us off from the Vitals and Essentials of Religion, the Life and Power of Godliness; and, in the Room thereof, engage and employ us into many needless Disputes, passionate Strivings, envious Whispers, unchristian Backbitings, and revengeful Actions. How sadly verified do we find that Word of the Apostle, *James iii. 16. Where Envyng and Strife is, there is Confusion, and every evil Work!* We have great Reason to plead and cry against this woful Spirit of Strife and Contention; for, where it doth take Place, the Church's best Friend is highly provok'd, the *Prince of Peace*; and she herself is sadly exposed to the Scorn and Derision of her Enemies.

3tio, It is most reproachful to a Church, when *doctrinal Errors* creep into her, when her Teachers begin to refile from the pure Truths of God handed down to them, and vent Doctrines which

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son more than *Revelation*, the Power of *corrupt*
Nature more than *efficacious free Grace*, Mens
 own *moral Performances* more than *imputed*
Righteousness, Jesus Christ as a *Pattern* more
 than as a *Propitiation* ; or any other Opinions
 which tend to sap the Foundation of Christiani-
 ty, or reproach the holy Spirit's Operations,
 and Life of Faith, with the Name of *Enthusiasm* :
 These are Church-exposing Evils, which we
 ought to bewail and pray against.

4to, It is reproachful to a Church, when she
 is smitten with *Barrenness* and *Unfruitfulness*,
 with respect to *converting of Souls*, and bring-
 ing forth Children to God : When the great
 Doctrine of Regeneration and the New-birth
 is little preached or experienced in her ; or, when
 in Judgment she hath given her a *miscarrying*
Womb and *dry Breasts*. Lord, spare thy People,
 and give not thine Heritage to this Reproach.

5to, It is a Church-disgracing Evil, when
 God *withdraws* his holy Spirit and his gracious
 Influences from her Ministers and Teachers in
 any Measure or Degree ; of which there are
 many, and each of them is to be dreaded and
 deprecated by us. As, 1st, When we are de-
 prived of the Gifts and Qualifications we once
 had. 2^{dly}, When the Light and Knowledge
 we retain, hath no Influence on our Consciences.
 3^{dly}, When we lose our Spirituality and Live-
 liness in the Worship and Service of God. 4^{thly},
 When we are straitned in our Approaches to
 God. 5^{thly}, When we begin to think Duty
 a *Weariness*, and our Hearts are alienated from

it. *6thly*, When Heart-plagues and indwelling Corruptions prevail and increase, as Heart-Atheism, Unbelief, Carnality, &c. *7thly*, When we incline towards the Temptations of Sin, and Society of ungodly Men. *8thly*, When wonted Restraints are taken off, and we turn loose and profane in our Lives, so as (like *Esau's* Sons) to tempt Men to abhor the Offerings of the Lord. *O Lord, spare thy People, and give not thy Church to this Reproach.*

6to, It is reproachful to the Lord's Vineyard, when *Breaches* are made in her Walls and Fences, so that her Enemies, the Foxes and wild Beasts, break in, and spoil the Vines: When Strangers do devour her Strength, these of a different Perswasion and Communion do spoil her of her ancient Rights and Liberties: When Patrons and their Abettors thrust in Pastors upon Christian Congregations against their Will, whereby God's Ordinances are deserted, the Ministry is contemned, the Lord's Day is profaned, the Flock of Christ is scattered and exposed as a Prey to Seducers. These are Evils we should bewail and pray against with Tears, crying, *Lord, spare thy Church, and give her not up to this Reproach.*

7mo, It is disgracing to a Church, when God *hides his Face* from her when under Oppression and Distress, and covers himself with a Cloud, that their Prayers cannot pass through; so that Enemies are ready to say, as in the Text, *Where is their God?* "Where is the Fruit of all your Prayers? where is he in whom you trusted for Help? where is your covenanted God,"

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“ of whose Promises, to relieve you in Trouble, “ you wont to boast ? ” This Reproach is as a Sword in his Peoples Bones, *Psal. xlii. 10.* against which let us pray, *Lord, spare thy People, and give not thine Heritage to this sad Reproach.*

8vo, It doth sadly expose a Church, when her *Pillars* are removed ; when these are discouraged or taken away, who wont to weep and wrestle between the Porch and the Altar, and stood in the Breach to keep off Wrath from her ; when her burning and shining Lights are extinguished ; the precious Sons of *Zion* are thrown by as earthen Pitchers ; when faithful Teachers are removed into Corners or Graves, and such put in their Room, who are unexperienced in Religion, harden People in their Sins, or lull them asleep in a christless and unregenerate State. It is distressing to a Church, when her Pillars are struck at, Persecution is intended against the Champions of Christ's Cause ; whereby others are intimidated with Fear to own it. How low was the Church brought in *Herod's* Time, *Acts xii.* when *James* was killed with the Sword, *Peter* in Prison ready to be execute, and all the rest of the *Apostles* were designed as Sacrifices ? Then the Pillars shook, the Disciples trembled, and the Enemies triumphed. This was a Time of Reproach ; and it becomes all the Ministers of the Lord to weep between the Porch and the Altar, and cry ; *Spare thy People, O Lord, give not thine Heritage to this Reproach, or any other Church-disgracing Evil.*

II. The

II. The *second* Head I proposed was, To shew why Ministers should be so earnest with God to avert these Church-exposing Evils. Reasons for it :

1. Because God expressly requires this at their Hand, as in the Text, and also in *Isa. lxii. 6, 7. I have set Watchmen upon thy Walls, O Jerusalem,——Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not Silence ; and give him no Rest, till he establish Jerusalem.* Where we may see the great End for which God sets Ministers in such public Posts ; it is not to keep Silence in an evil Time as other prudent Men may do, but to speak aloud in Zion's Behalf, and to interceed and wrestle with God for her. And we see God requires Faithfulness in this Matter.

2. This hath been the approved Practice of the Lord's Prophets and Ministers in all Ages. How earnest was *Moses* in wrestling and pleading for the Church in his Day ! *Exod. xxxii. 11, 12, 13. And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy Wrath wax hot against thy People, which thou hast brought forth out of the Land of Egypt, with great Power and a mighty Hand ? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For Mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the Mountains, and consume them from the Earth ? Turn from thy fierce Wrath, and repent of this Evil against thy People. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel thy Servants, to whom thou swarest, &c.* Here is an intercessory Prayer for *Israel*, full of the most powerful Arguments, worthy of our Imitation. In like Manner was the Prophet *Samuel* imployed for the Church in

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his Time, *1 Sam. xii. 23.* As for me (saith he)
God forbid that I should sin against the Lord,
in ceasing to pray for you. So the Prophet
David wrestled for the Church, *Psal. xiv. 7.*
O that the Salvation of Israel were come out of
Zion! *Psal. xxv. 22.* Redeem Israel, O God,
out of all his Troubles. *Psal. li. 18.* Do Good in
thy good Pleasure unto Zion, build thou the
Walls of Jerusalem. So *Asaph, Psal. lxxx. 14.*
Return, we beseech thee, O God of Hosts: Look
down from Heaven, and visit this Vine, &c.
Likewise the Prophet *Isaiah* was thus concern'd,
Isa. lxii. 1. For Zion's Sake will I not hold my
Peace, and for Jerusalem's Sake will I not
rest, until the Righteousness thereof go forth as
Brightness, and the Salvation thereof as a
Lamp that burneth. And so the Prophet *Dan-*
iel wrestled fervently for the Church, *Dan. ix.*
16, 17, 18, 19. So did *Nehemiah, Neh. i. 5, 6,*
7, 8, 9, &c. And so did the Apostle *Paul,*
Rom. i. 9. and *x. 1.* *Eph. i. 16, 17.* But I
have a greater Pattern to lay before you than all
these, even that of the Angel of the Covenant,
the great Prophet and Teacher of the Church,
Zeck. i. 12. How earnestly doth he plead for
the Church in Distress? O Lord of Hosts, how
long wilt thou not have Mercy on Jerusalem,
and the Cities of Judah, against which thou
hast had Indignation these Seventy Years? Let
us imitate him,

3. Because God is exceedingly delighted with
such Pleadings, and allows great Familiarity to
these who interceed for his Church, *Isa. xlv.*
11. and promiseth Prosperity to them, *Psal.*
cxxii. 6.

4. Ministers should be more earnest for the Church in Trouble than other Men, because they are Christ's principal Servants, who should be more zealous for their glorious Master than others, and know best the near Relation the Church stands in to him, that she is his City, his House, his Heritage, his Spouse, his Body, and the Purchase of his Blood. And therefore Ministers, for their Master's Sake, should interpose with the greatest Earnestness for the Church.

5. Because Ministers are, by their Office, bound to have more Compassion than others to precious Souls, which cannot miss to be in a miserable Situation, when the Church is distressed with spiritual Judgments, as the Withdrawing of the Spirit from Ordinances, and the Plague of dry Breasts.

6. Because at such a Time the Souls of Ministers are like to suffer as well as others; for the Church being the Mother of us all, if it be ill with her, and her Condition sickly and pining, our Souls must languish with other Mens.

7. Because Ministers should best know the Hazard of being silent and unconcerned about the Church's Danger and Trouble; seeing there is a heavy Wo denounced against them, *who are at Ease in Zion, and are not grieved for the Affliction of Joseph, Amos vi. 1, 6.* And they know what Wrath was threatened against *Esther*, if she did keep Silence when the Church was in Danger, *Esther iv. 14. For if thou altogether hold thy Peace at this Time, then shall Enlargement and Deliverance arise to the Jews from*

from another Place, but thou and thy Father's House shall be destroyed.

HEAD III. *The Improvement.*

First Use may be of *Lamentation*, upon the Account of our Silence and Unconcernedness who are Ministers about the Church of God when in Danger and Distress. Ah! how few are there among us of *Eli's* Disposition this Day, whose Hearts are trembling for the Ark of God! How few weeping between the Porch and the Altar, and crying, *Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thine Inheritance to Reproach!* Witness the Unfrequency of Fast-Days, and the cold Entertainment given to Motions for observing them. What! Is it a Time for Silence and Easiness, when the Affairs of *Zion* are in such a melancholly Situation both at home and abroad? Is it Time for us to dwell at Ease in our ceiled Houses, when the Lord's House is threatned to be laid waste by our woful Backslidings, and destructive Divisions? Is it becoming the Character of Christ's Ambassadors, to shew an Indifferency anent his Church's Danger, and to act the Part of a Heathen *Gallio*, to care for none of these Things? O what Cause have we to bewail the Case of those, who can be easy about the publick Interest of the Church, if it go well with their own private Affairs; who care not, if they can swim in Prosperity, tho' the Church be drowned in Tears and Blood! What is this! but to be like the King and *Haman*, who sat down to drink when the City *Shushan* was perplex'd, *Esth. iii. 15.* For a

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Christian Minister to mind his private Concerns, and neglect the Publick, is as great Folly, as if a Sailor in a Storm should notice only his private Chest, and neglect the Vessel in which he and his Effects are embarked. It is recorded as a Praise-worthy Action, and a noble Evidence of a publick Spirit in one *Terentius*, a Captain under the Emperor *Valens*, who having done some special Service to the Emperor, for which he judged him worthy of an eminent Reward, he bid him ask what he would have, and it should be granted. Whereupon, after Advise-ment, he wrote a Petition to the Emperor, That the Orthodox Christians might have Liberty of a Church by themselves, where they might worship God separately from the *Arians*. The Emperor being *Arian* himself, was much offended with the Petition, tore it in Pieces, and threw it away, bidding the Captain ask something for himself: But he carefully gathering up the Pieces of his torn Petition, said, If he could not be heard in Christ's Cause, he would ask nothing for himself. Alas, that we, who are Christ's Ministers, should fall so much short of this Soldier in Concern for Christ's Interest!

But the best Improvement we can make of this Doctrine is for Amendment; and therefore I proceed to a

Second Use, of Exhortation. And here, my dear Brethren, suffer me to be your humble Remembrancer, and my own Monitor: And the Duty exhorted to is that I have been insisting upon from the Text, *Weep and pray* for all the Churches of God that are in Distress, and especially

concerns, especially the Church of *Scotland*, our Mother-Church, which at this Day is in Danger of being torn in Pieces and destroyed, if God in his Mercy do not prevent it. O let us cry with all our Might, *Lord, spare thy People, and give not thine Heritage, in Scotland, to Reproach: Wherefore should they say among the People, Where is their God?* And, for your Encouragement to wrestle and plead with God in her Behalf, let me offer these Considerations;

1. Such Pleadings are most acceptable to God, and prevalent with him. Who are they but the Wrestlers that deliver the Church, and preserve the Island?

2. These who are most concerned for the Church in Danger, shall have the greatest Share in her Comforts when God rescues her. They who sow most of the Seed of Tears for Zion, shall reap most of her Joys when the Harvest comes.

3. We have noble Arguments to make use of in pleading with God for this poor Church, as well as they had for *Israel* of old;

As, (1.) The Compassion of his Nature, which hath often interposed for this Church, when he seemed to be giving her up. So was it in the Case of *Israel*, Judges x. 14. where God appeared to reject them, and bid them, *Go cry to the gods they had chosen, and let these deliver them in the Time of their Trouble*; yet, when *Israel* persisted in crying for Pity, it is said, v. 16. *His Soul was grieved for the Misery of Israel, and he delivered them.*

(2.) We may plead the Glory of his Name, as of old, *Jer. xiv. 21. Lord, do not disgrace the*

the Throne of thy Glory, viz. the Temple where thy Glory is displayed : q. d. " Lord, we deserve " to have Disgrace put upon us ; but O let it " be in such a Way, that the Disgrace may not " reflect upon thyself, upon thy Worship, thy " Ordinances, thy Attributes, thy Promises. " Let not our Enemies have Occasion to reproach thy Name, or to say, Where is now " their God? Where is the God they always " boasted of, as superior to all the gods of the " Nations ?" So may we say, Lord, do for thine own Name's Sake : It is no great Matter what become of the Ministers or Professors of Scotland ; But what wilt thou do for thy great Name, that may come some way to suffer with them? Lord, what will the Egyptians say? Exod. xxxii.

(3.) We may plead his Covenant with us, as they did, *Jer. xiv. 21. Lord, remember and break not Covenant with us. Tho' we have broke to thee, Lord, do not thou break to us. We are a People in Covenant with thee more explicately than other Nations: We are a Land peculiarly given to Christ by the Father's Donation, as being among the Ends and uttermost Parts of the Earth, and among the Isles, which have seen his Salvation, and waited for his Law : We are a Land most solemnly devoted to God by our reforming Ancestors, who, in a National Way, avouched the Lord to be their God ; and at the same Time gave up themselves and their Posterity to the Lord ; and thou, Lord, didst declare thyself well-pleased with the Bargain, thou didst fill the Temple with thy Glory, work great Deliverances for us, and raise up Sa-*
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riours unto us, when we were brought very low. O do not now forsake thine Inheritance !

D I R E C T I O N S.

I proceed in the next Place, with all Humility, to offer some Advices proper for Ministers of the Gospel relative to this Subject : And, that I may the better reach them, I shall propose and answer some Questions.

Quest. 1. What Things shall we pray for at this Time unto this Church, for preventing her Reproach, retrieving her Credit, and promoting her Welfare ?

Ans. 1. Let us pray for a Spirit of Repentance, Mourning and Supplication to all Ranks among us, that we may all be disposed to humble ourselves before the Lord, and mournfully to bewail our Sins, our Backslidings and Defections, which have provoked God to withdraw from us, and threaten to give us up to Reproach. O that Scotland were brought to the Temper of penitent returning Israel, 1 Sam. vii. 2. where it is said, that *all Israel lamented after the Lord* ! Were all Ranks moved in a penitent Manner to come and lament after a departing God, it would be a hopeful Token for the Land.

2. Let us pray for God's *pouring out his Spirit from on high* upon the Ordinances and Assemblies of this Land, for convincing, enlightning and converting of Souls to the Lord : For our Affairs will never take a Turn to the better, *until the Spirit be poured out from on high*, Isa. xxxij. 15. till then, our Wilderness will not be turned to a fruitful Field. Well then, let us all

all pray for a Time when Gospel-ordinances dispensed by us shall be remarkably backed with God's Power and Presence; for a Time when by the Effusion of the Spirit *a great and effectual Door shall be opened to us*, as was to Paul at *Ephesus*, 1 Cor. xvi. 9. a Door of *Utterance* opened in Ministers Mouths, and a Door of *Entrance* in Sinners Hearts: A Time when Ministers Minds shall be enlightned, their Hearts warmed, Memories strengthened, and Tongues loosed, so that they shall have a great Facility in uttering their Thoughts; *Their Hearts shall indite a good Matter, and their Tongues be as the Pen of a ready Writer*. Let us pray for the Time when Ministers Mouths shall be opened, and Hearers Appetites sharpened; when Ministers Hearts shall be enlarged, and Hearers Hearts melted; when the Arrows of the Word shall be directed by a powerful Hand to pierce the Consciences of Men, and they brought thereby to make serious Enquiries about their eternal State, *What must we do to be saved?* This would retrieve our Credit.

3. Let us pray earnestly for the *Down-pouring* of the Spirit upon young *Students* and *Expe-riants* of the holy Ministry, That God may make them acquainted with Regeneration-work in their younger Years, and raise up amongst them eminent Instruments of his Glory; make them burning and shining Lights, Men of publick Spirits, who will desire to spend and be spent for the Glory of Christ, and winning of Souls; Men that will prefer *Jerusalem* to their chiefest Joy; Men that will be suitably weighted with the Work they are undertaking, and concerned

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cerned to be cleared about their having God's Call to it ; Men that will not rush forwardly upon the Work, have an active Hand in thrusting themselves into the Vineyard, and so run un-sent, but wait patiently till God clear their Way. O that God would raise up such a Ministry in *Scotland* for the next Age ! O that he would send such *Labourers into his Harvest* ! this would prevent our Reproach, and retrieve our Credit.

4. Let us pray for the Continuance of the *Purity of Doctrine and Worship* in the Land, That God may preserve us from *Deism*, and whatever hath a Tendency thereto ; and from all *Po-pis*, *Socinian*, or *Arian* Errors ; and that he may deliver us from all *Pelagian* and *Armini-an* Tenets and Opinions, that so Men may see and acknowledge God in every Thing, whereas *Pelagians* and *Arminians* scarce see God in any Thing, but make Man himself (as it were) a God, by ascribing all to his natural Powers, and making him independent with respect to his Conversion and spiritual Performances. O what a Reproach would it be to us, if such Errors should prevail among us !

5. Let us pray for the *Preservation* of the *Peace* and *Unity* of this Church, and that our Breaches may all be healed, and greater Breaches prevented ; That God may pity us in our present Situation, and raise up *Peace-makers* amongst us : That he may inspire all the Ministers of this Church with a Spirit of *Meekness*, *Charity* and *Forbearance* towards their Brethren, who cannot attain to the same Light with them in some lesser Matters ; and that he may deliver us from a Spirit of *Bitterness*, *Malice* or *Persecution* against our

our Brethren. O how monstrous and reproachful will it be, for these who bear the Character of Christ's *Lambs* and *Doves*, to fall a biting and tearing one another like Lions and Birds of Prey!

6. Let us pray for the *Removing* of all these Things which are the *Causes of Division* and *Contention* among us; and particularly for Deliverance from all spiritual Oppression, and Encroachments upon the Rights and Liberties of this Church, by Patrons or others, that so Congregations may be supplied with Pastors with the Consent and Good-liking of the Members thereof; this would contribute much for our Welfare, and prevent our Reproach.

7. Let us pray, That God would pour out a *Spirit* of *Reformation*, and of Zeal for Piety, and against all Manner of Sin and Vice, upon all Ranks of Persons amongst us; such as *Magistrates, Ministers, Elders, Heads of Families, Parents and Teachers of Youth*; So that every one in their respective Stations may vigorously exert themselves for suppressing Sin, and recommending the Exercise of Godliness amongst those committed to their Charge: And hereby the Credit and Prosperity of the Church would be greatly promoted.

Quest. 2. *How is it that we must pray for the Church, so as to prevail?*

Ans. 1. Let us pray in Faith, Jam. i. 6. believing that God is infinite in Power, and able to help; full of Compassion, and ready to help; and depending intirely upon the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ for Acceptance in our Prayers.—2. Let us pray with *Fervency*, like *Jacob*, who wrestled with God, when he prayed.

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ed. Let us by importunate Addresses besiege Heaven with holy Violence; and, like *Samson*, let us bow ourselves with all our Might, in order to pull down the Pillars of *Dagon's Temple*.—

3. Let us join *penitent Tears* with our fervent Prayers; for, in the Text, we find *Weeping* and *Praying* linked together: Also the famous Wrestler *Jacob wept and made Supplication*, when he prevailed with the Angel, *Hos. xii. 4.*

—4. Let us pray in an *argumentative Manner*, when we plead with God for his Church; let us fill our Mouths with Arguments, as in the Text, and as *Moses* did, *Exod. xxxii. 11, 12, 13.*

5. Let us pray with *Perseverance*, as we are directed, *Eph. vi. 18. Rom. xii. 12. Hold not your Peace, give him no Rest*, saith the Prophet, *Isa. lxii. 1, 6, 7.*—6. Let our Prayers be joined with

a *diligent Use of the Means*, to obtain the Favours we ask: As idle Beggars are not welcome to Man's Door, so neither are they to God's. And this leads to

Quest. 3. *What are these Means and Endeavours proper to be used by us, in Conjunction with our Prayers, in order to obtain the Credit and Prosperity of this Church, and to prevent her Reproach?*

Ans. I desire in the humblest Manner to offer these following to my Brethrens Consideration;

1. Let us all endeavour to be like the *well-furnished Scribe*, that bringeth forth out of his Treasure, *Things both new and old*, i. e. Let us study to be furnished with a Stock of necessary and useful Knowledge, that we may bring forth Variety of Provision for the Entertainment of our

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Peoples Souls; *The Priests Lips should preserve Knowledge.* In the *first* Place, Let us all be well skilled in *Scripture-Knowledge*, in the *Knowledge of God* and his *Perfections*, and of the *Mystery of the Trinity* so far as revealed, and of *Jesus Christ our Surety and Sacrifice*. Likewise we need the *Knowledge of human Arts and Sciences*, and of the *Languages*; and especially these in which the holy Bible was first written: This Knowledge is a good Handmaid to Divinity and Scripture-Knowledge; and, for acquiring these, we ought to have Nurseries of Learning, and Schools of the Prophets, as in ancient Ages.

There is a Sect lately risen among us, who decry such Knowledge as unnecessary for Gospel-Ministers, and therefore make Choice of illiterate Men for that Office. But, if the *Devil* should stir up *Arians, Socinians, Deists*, or others, to make an Attack upon our holy Religion, what could such Men do to defend it? If *Rome* should send her *subtile Jesuits* and *learned Priests* among us, to subvert the *Protestant Doctrines*, and mislead our People, how would these unlearned Preachers be able to maintain them, and discover the Fallacies of their Arguments?

Object. O (say they) *we have the Word to oppose them.*

Answer. 1st, Had there not been Men of Learning before you to have translated it, you even would not had that. 2^{dly}, Put the best Sword ever was, in the Hand of one that wants Skill to use it, he could not thereby defend himself against him that is expert in the Art of Fencing. When the cunning Jesuit shall alledge, The Passage you
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quote is not justly translated, what would you answer him? It hath been judiciously observed by the Authors of our Ecclesiastick Histories, that the Bloody Emperor *Dioclesian* did not so much Mischief to the Church and her Ministers, as the Emperor *Julian* the *Apostate* did. The first indeed put many of them to Death, but the *Devil* learned *Julian* another Way, viz. to take away the Maintenance of Ministers, and put down their Schools of Learning; and hereby *Julian* did the greatest Damage of the two: For, tho' *Dioclesian* took many eminent Men away, there still arose others in their Stead: but the Robbing of *Ministers, and Schools of Learning*, of their Maintenance and Revenues, did hinder a Succession of able Ministers in the Church. And shall any Lover of Zion join Issue with that infamous *Apostate*? Let young *Preachers* and *Expectants* remember this, that they may diligently improve their excellent Opportunities in furnishing themselves with the Knowledge of the *Languages, History, Philosophy, Mathematicks, Geography, Astronomy, and Polemick Divinity*, which are good Handmaids to Scripture-Knowledge: And this would be one Way to promote the Welfare of this Church; and prevent her Reproach; for an ignorant Ministry is a Reproach to any Church.

II. Let all of us study in a special Manner to be found among these who deserve the Character of *able Ministers of the New Testament*; mentioned by the Apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 6. *Quest.* Who is it that may be denominate an *able Minister of the New Testament*? *Ans.* He is one that is well-skilled in the Mystery of Christ, and him crucified; that knows how to open up

the Covenant of Grace, and the Method of our Justification by Jesus Christ and his Righteousness only. He makes it his main Business to hold forth the Excellency and Usefulness of Christ, both for our *Justification* and *Sanctification*. He looks upon Jesus Christ as the Christian's great *Surety* and *Sacrifice*, and also as his *Head of Influences*, his Life, and that *without Christ we can do nothing*: And therefore he makes it the great End of his Sermons to exalt Christ, and free Grace displayed thro' him; to preach up *Christ*, and preach down *Self*; to make Christ *All*, and Self *nothing*: And, whether he preach Duties or Privileges, Threatnings or Promises, the Tendency of all is to lead Sinners from a Covenant of Works to a Covenant of Grace, from Self to Christ. Again, this *New-Testament Minister* not only preacheth up the Excellency of the *Righteousness of Christ*, and of *Faith* therein, for our Salvation; but he also insists upon the Necessity of *Repentance* for Sin, and *Reformation* from it: He presses the Practice of *Holiness* and all *moral Duties*, to compleat the Character of a true Christian: He assures all his Hearers, that *without Holiness no Man can see God*; seeing it is impossible that a Man can be a *good Christian* (profess what he will) unless he be a *good Moralist*; he must mind the *Second Table Duties* as well as the *First*; he must not only attend Divine Worship, but he must be sober, honest, chaste, meek, just, merciful, charitable and beneficent, minding his Neighbour's Interest as well as his own; and in these Things following the Example of the Holy Jesus, his Lord and Pattern. But then, the *New-Testament Minister* is concerned, that *Mens Morals* be

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of the right Stamp, that they be *Christian Morals*, and of the same Nature with Gospel-holiness or Sanctification ; and, in order thereto, he directs Men to Jesus Christ, the Treasure and Fountain of *Grace and Holiness*, the Fountain of *Sanctification* as well as of *Justification*. *Morality* performed in the Strength of Nature is still sowre Fruit, and can never please God, till it spring from Christ as the Root ; unregenerate *Morality*, however far Men advance in it, is still but Nature at best. The Heart must be renewed, and the Soul united to Christ, before *Morality* can be refined into *Gospel-holiness*, and *moral Virtues* commence *Christian Graces*. The Gospel-minister teacheth, that all *acceptable Morality*, all true *Grace or Holiness*, is the proper Result of the Soul's Union with the holy Jesus, our living Head, who is the first and immediate Receptacle of the holy Spirit, and of all sanctifying Influences for the Use of his Members ; and out of his Fulness we must by Faith receive these vital and quickning Influences necessary for promoting Sanctification in us. And O how much would it be for the Credit and Interest of this and every Christian Church, to be duly provided with such *able Ministers of the New Testament* !

III. Let us be diligent in instructing our People in the *Knowledge* of the *first Principles* of Christianity, and especially in Catechizing of the *Youth*. The most famous of the ancient Fathers have gloried in their being *Catechists*. This is a most necessary Part of our Work : For, if the Foundations of Knowledge be not carefully laid amongst our People, our Success must be marred ; the best Sermons will be lost upon them, if Ignorance prevail among them. And, seeing
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Youth is the moulding Age, and the proper Season for receiving Instruction, we ought to improve it well by frequent and diligent Catechizing. A Vessel will long retain the Scent of that with which it is first seasoned; so Persons are more ready to retain good Impressions made upon them in the Time of Youth than afterwards. Let us look upon the *Young* as the Seed of the next Generation, as the *Lambs* of the Flock, towards whom a special Care and Tenderness is to be expressd. The first Charge Christ gave to *Peter* was, to feed his *Lambs*, the Young and Weak of the Flock. This is the most usual Season of Conversion, the Time when the Heart is soonest melted, and the Affections are most pliable; and, if ever we prevail with Sinners, *Youth* is the most likely Time for it. And therefore let us have a tender Care of the *Young* in our Congregations, and more especially at their first Admission to the Lord's Table: This is the Time of their renewing their baptismal Covenant, their becoming Christians by their own voluntary Choice, as well as by their Parents Dedication; the Time of their entring into the State of *adult Church-members*; the Time of laying the *Foundation-stone* of their *spiritual Building*, their Souls Salvation: And therefore it should be done with Deliberation, holy Skill, and deep Digging by Humiliation, Repentance, Self-searching, renouncing Self-Righteousness, and removing all false Foundations, till they win to the Rock Christ, and his most perfect Righteousness, as the only Ground of their Justification and Acceptance at God's Bar. And, this being such a critical Time for their Souls, we ought, according to the Assembly's Direction, diligently

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to instruct them before their first Admission to the Lords Supper, particularly as to the Covenant of Grace, and the Articles thereof; and take them solemnly engaged thereunto, and that in a more express Way than we did their Fathers at their Baptism. Let us put such Questions to them as these, and wait for their Answers.

1. Q. What Sense have you of your Misery by Nature, and while under the Covenant of Works?

2. Q. Do you see the Need you stand in of the Mediator's Help to relieve you out of this State?

3. Q. Are you sensible of your breaking your baptismal Engagements, by running away from Christ your Captain, going over to the Devil's Camp, and standing long out against Christ's Calls?

4. Q. Are you desirous to return unto the Lord, as penitent Prodigals, and mourning Backsliders, with your Faces Zion-wards, weeping as ye go, willing to renew your baptismal Vows, saying, *Come let us join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting Covenant, never to be forgotten?*

5. Q. Are you content to break with the Trinity of Hell, and engage with the Trinity of Heaven? i. e. Are you content to renounce the World, the Devil, and the Flesh; and to accept of God the Father as your Father, God the Son as your Redeemer, and God the Holy Ghost as your Sanctifier, in whose Name ye are baptized.

6. Q. Do you admire redeeming Love in the Son of God his undertaking to be a Surety and Sacrifice for the Race of fallen Adam, when he past by fallen Angels?

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7. Q. Do you heartily approve of this excellent Contrivance and Gospel-method of Salvation thro' the Suretiship and Satisfaction of Jesus Christ? Do ye think this a Device worthy of God, and of infinite Wisdom?

8. Q. Are you therefore willing to renounce your own Righteousness and Strength as insufficient to answer the Demands of the Law, and to accept of a Surety for both, and say, *In the Lord Jesus I have Righteousness and Strength*; I am willing to make Use of a borrowed Strength for my Performing of Duty, and of a borrowed Righteousness for my Acceptance in Duty?

9. Q. Are you willing to go in to this Self-denying Method of Salvation; and are you well pleased with it, as it tends to make you eternal Debtors to free Grace, excludes all glorying and boasting in the Creature, and ascribes all the Glory of your Salvation to Christ only; takes the Crown off the Head of *Self*, and puts it on the Head of *Christ*?

10. Q. Are you content to accept of Jesus Christ, the Mediator betwixt God and Man, in all his Offices; as a Prophet, to instruct and teach you; as a Priest, to atone and interceed for you; and as a King, to rule in and over you?

11. Q. Are you content to take Christ as a King to govern you by his Laws, as well as a Priest to save you by his Blood? Are you desirous he may come in as a King to execute his kingly Office in your Soul, to set up his Throne in your Heart, and to subdue all indwelling Sin, and to conquer all your Lusts and Corruptions?

12. Q. Do you look on your Sins as the Enemies and Crucifiers of Christ? and do you resolve

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olve thro' his Grace to throw out every one of them, and to harbour none of these Murderers; and to give no *House-room* nor *Heart-room* to the least Nail or Thorn that pierced Christ?

13. Q. Are you willing to cut off every *Right-hand*, and pluck out every *Right-eye* for Christ, and not to count any Sin too dear to part with for Jesus Christ?

14. Q. Do you desire to come to Christ for *Sanctification* as well as for *Justification*; for *Holiness* as well as for *Happiness*; for *Conformity* and *Likeness* to God, as well as for *Access* to dwell with God?

15. Q. Do you come willingly as a Volunteer, at the Sound of the Gospel-trumpet, to lift yourself under Christ's Banner, resolving to forsake the Devil's Camp, and swear Allegiance to King Jesus; to take up Arms for him, and fight against his Enemies, the *Devil*, the *World* and the *Flesh*, all the Days of your Life?

16. Q. Do you accept of all God's Ordinances, his Word, Sacraments, Prayer, &c. as necessary *Helps to Heaven*, and Means of conveying Grace, which you will esteem and make Use of with Care and Diligence?

17. Q. Do you accept of Christ's People, these who bear his Image, as your beloved Friends, your Fellow-travellers; firmly resolving to join with Christ's little Flock, his praying Flock, his sin-hating Flock, his Flock that fear an Oath, and that notwithstanding of the Reproach of Singularity?

18. Q. Do you thro' his Grace purpose never to follow the Multitude to do Evil, or join with them in common Sins; but stedfastly to avoid and

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resist all the Temptations and Snares of evil Company, and say with *David* to them, *Depart from me, ye evil Doers, for I will keep the Commandments of my God ?*

19. Q. Are you willing to accept of the *Rod* and *Discipline* of Christ's House ; to welcome his Convictions and Reproofs, as well as his Comforts and Smiles ; to take Christ with his Cross, as well as Christ with his Crown ; to suffer the World's Hatred and Scofts, and other Persecutions for Christ ?

20. Q. Are you resolved thro' Grace, that no Temptation or Discouragement shall make you prove *Run-aways* or *Deserters* from the Captain of your Salvation, but that you will adhere to him, and abide by his Standard all the Days of your Life ?

21. Q. As you are content to accept of Christ, and all that belongs to him ; are you not also willing to give up and surrender yourself to the Lord, and all that belongs unto you, to be disposed of by him at his Pleasure ; all that you are, Soul and Body, Heart, Mind, Will, Conscience, Memory ; and all that you have, Time, Talents, Relations, Enjoyments, &c.

22. Q. When Christ and the Devil are striving for your Heart, and each of them saying, *My Son, give me thy Heart* ; and when Christ is putting it to your Choice in the Days of Youth, saying, *Chuse whom you will yield unto, Chuse whom you will serve* ; What doth your Heart answer unto him ?

23. Q. Is it your Purpose to engage to all the Articles of the Covenant in borrowed Strength, wholly distrusting your own Strength and

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and Resolutions ; and resolving to trust, not in your Promise to Christ, but in Christ's Promise to you, that he *will never leave you nor forsake you* ?

24. Q. Do you resolve to live a Life of Prayer and Acquaintance with Christ all your Days ; that you will always run to God, and consult him in all Cases ?

25. Q. Are you resolved also to live a Life of Faith and Dependence daily on the Son of God, for his *Righteousness* to cover Guilt, for his *Strength* to perform Duty, conquer Sin, resist Temptations, bear Crosses and Afflictions ?

26. Q. Are you resolved to make Ordinances always *Trysting-places* betwixt Christ and you, and to look still for a Meeting with him in every one of them ; and to count every Sabbath and Sermon as lost, wherein you miss his Presence ?

27. Q. Are you resolved to engagè to all these Articles in a secret Transaction and personal Covenant with God, before you come to his Table ; and then to come in a solemn Way to seal and ratify this Bargain and Covenant before Men and Angels at his Table ?

Thus let Ministers take Pains to instruct young Folk in the Nature and Articles of the Covenant of Grace, and to take them engaged, with some Solemnity, to own and adhere to them, at their first Admission to the Lord's Supper ; and let them, with solemn and fervent Prayer, recommend and give up these young Communicants unto the Lord : Such a Course hath been found by Experience very much to contribute to the Welfare and Prosperity of the Church.

4thly, It would be for the Honour and Interest

rest of the Church, to have our Sermons to the People *flowing from the Heart*, i. e. for us to be suitably affected and impressed with the Truths we deliver to them. A *speculative Preacher*, that preacheth merely from Strength of Parts, doth not much Good, because his Light hath no Heat accompanying it. That which cometh only from the Head, commonly reacheth no further than the Head ; but that which cometh from the Heart, is most likely to reach to the Heart. The best Way to bring our People to believe and be affected with our Doctrine, is, to let them see that we believe it, and are affected with it ourselves. Such a Preacher was *Paul*, who preached and *warned* his Hearers *with Tears*, Acts xx. 31. Phil. iii. 18. He knew, the strongest Reasons and Arguments, proposed without Affection and Warmness, would not prevail : Nay, a blunt Iron, if hot, will sooner pierce the Wood, than a sharper Iron that is cold. Our famous Countryman, Mr. *John Livingstone*, who was a happy Instrument in God's Hand of converting many Souls, perhaps some Hundreds at one Sermon ; He tells in his Life, That the Times when he was most successful, were, when he got his own Heart in the most lively, warm and tender Frame before he went to the Pulpit.

sibly, If we would promote the Credit and Welfare of the Church, let us be *diligent to know the State of our Flocks*, enquire into their Cases, and look after the Fruits of our Sermons amongst them. And, for this End, let us frequently visit them in their Houses, and thereby give them Occasion to lay open their Cases to us ; and let us

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us improve these Times by *Examination* and *In- struction*, for they are apt to forget what we say to them, if we do not cause them speak some- thing relative to the Subject themselves. There- fore let us ask them concerning their Proficiency by the Word, and what they remember of the Sermons they lately heard, and of the Bible and other Books which they have read, and what Impressions these Things made upon them? If they be convinced of the Evil of Sin, and be hum- bled for it; and of the Necessity of Duty, and be excited to it, by what they hear or read? And let us give them Advices how to hear and read more profitably for the future. Thus let us go *from House to House*, like the Apostle *Paul*, to see how our People do, warning every One as we see Occasion for it. Let us act the Part of good Gardeners, who, after they have sown their Seeds, look after the Springing thereof, water some Beds in Time of Drought, and pluck up the noxious Weeds; likewise it is fit we should frequently look over our *Examine-rolls* in our Closets, to bring the various Cases of our People to our Remembrance, that we may mind them in our Prayers, and prepare suitable Doctrine for them.

6thly, If we would promote the Credit and Prosperity of our Mother-Church, let us be *frequent in dispensing the holy Supper* amongst our People. Our *Unfrequency* in this Service is a Reproach to us among foreign Churches, as well as a real Loss to the Souls committed to our Charge. If ever our People attend to what they hear, or get Benefit by the Gospel, it is most commonly about the Time of a Sacrament, and when they are making Preparation for it. Tho' this

this be not a *converting* Ordinance to the Receivers in the very Nature of it, but *strengthening* and *confirming*, yet Sermons and Discourses about this Time, upon the melting Subject of a crucified Jesus, have been the Means of converting many Thousands. Besides, the *frequent dispensing* of this Soul-affecting Ordinance would be a good Way to keep up the Remembrance of God, of Christ, and of Heaven among our People; and to keep up the Impressions of the Evil of Sin, the Worth of Souls, the Love of God in giving his Son to the World, and the Love of Christ in dying for us. Likewise it would be a good Mean to help the Carelessness of our Peoples Minds, the Weakness of their Memories, the Dulness of their Capacities, and their small Proficiency in Knowledge: For in this Ordinance they have a compendious and affecting View of the whole Scheme of the Christian Religion at once; They have Man's *Fall and Disease*, together with his *Remedy and Recovery*, set forth to the Life, and in such a Way as to make Impression upon their outward Senses. And further, would we have our People effectually engaged to Family-Worship, secret Prayer, and a tender Walk? Would we have Swearing, minch'd Oaths, Sabbath-breaking and other Vices kept under constant Rebukes? Would we conquer these Evils which prevail among our People? let us frequently set before their Eyes the bleeding Wounds of a crucified Jesus, these Sin-killing Objects, as represented in the holy Sacrament. We have no better Way than this to advance the Glory of our Redeemer, and the Salvation of our People's Soul's; and, seeing we have

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so short a Time for doing either, we have Need to bestir ourselves. Nay, my Brethren, as ye would desire to keep *glorious Christ* in perpetual Esteem, *Sin* in continual Disgrace, the *World* in lasting Contempt, *Religion* in constant Credit among Men, and as ye would desire to retrieve the Honour of this National Church, and wipe off her Reproach, I beseech you to administer the Lord's Supper oftner than once in the Year, in your Congregations.

7thly, As I would have you frequent in the *Administration*, so I would have you strict in the *Admission* to it. Our *Confession of Faith* declares it to be a great Sin in Ministers to admit either *Ignorant* or *Ungodly* Persons to the Lord's Table. It is incumbent on us therefore to look well out, that we do not admit any Swearer, Drunkard, Sabbath-breaker, evil Speaker, malicious Person, or any other guilty of any scandalous Sin, to eat of these holy Things; *procul hinc, procul inde profani*. It would be a Mean to dart home Convictions and awakning Thoughts upon Sinners, to find themselves excluded from this holy Ordinance for want of Family-worship, for idle Walking on the Lord's Day, for malicious Words or Actions, for excessive Drinking, for abusing of God's Name, for using petty Oaths, as, *By Faith, Conscience, &c.* And good Reason have we to exclude such, seeing the Spirit of God distinguisheth betwixt the Precious and the Vile, by the Characters of *him that sweareth, and him that feareth an Oath*, Eccl. ix. 2. And surely they who use minched Oaths, can never be ranked among these *who fear an Oath*.

Oath. I myself have the Experience of several Persons, who have been thankful to me for keeping them back from such Things, because the Dispensation had been blessed for humbling and reforming them.

Object. 1st, *It is hard to discover Persons who may be guilty of some of these Evils.*

Ans. 1st, Let us endeavour to get faithful and conscientious Elders, who will impartially inform us of our Peoples Manners; and, if we want such, let us be willing to take Information from others. 2dly, Let us pose the Consciences of these whom we suspect as guilty of any of these Practices, and they may be brought to confess them.

Object. 2d, *We will be in Hazard of disabling many of our People by such Strictness.*

Ans. 1st, We may edify Men, and promote their Soul's Interest, even when we displease them. 2dly, Better displease Men, than Him who is our great Master and Judge.—3dly, Let us take Pains to convince our People of the awful Charge given to us, as the Stewards of God's House, who must not give the Childrens Bread to the Dogs. As *Jehojadah* of old set Porters at the Gates of the House of the Lord, that so none who was unclean in any Thing should enter in, 2 Chron. xxiii. 19. So God hath set us Ministers as Porters to the holy Table of the Lord, that no profane Sinner, no Swearer, no malicious Person, no prayerless Man, no Man that harbours any known Sin, and is unwilling to part with it, may approach to it. As the Cherubims stood at the Entry of Paradise with a drawn Sword, to keep *Adam* from entering in

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to eat the Tree of Life ; so Ministers are to stand with the Sword of the Lord's Threatnings brandished against every inpenitent Sinner, every Swearer, every Drunkard, every Liar, every Sabbath-breaker, every Backbiter and Hater of his Neighbour, every Neglector of Family-worship or secret Prayer, that they do not presume to rush upon this holy Ordinance, while they continue in any of these Sins. This Strictness is necessary for the Welfare and Reputation of our Church, and to wipe away Reproach.

8thly, As we would consult the Credit and Safety of this Church, let us consider well whom we appoint for our *Successors in Office* ; i. e. Let us take Care whom we license and ordain, that they be Men of Piety, Prudence and Parts, Men that will exert themselves for the Glory of God, and for winning of the Souls of the rising Generation, that we may have Ground to hope that Religion will be entailed to succeeding Ages. We see how strictly the Apostle enjoined *Timothy* to *commit the Ministry to faithful Men, to lay Hands suddenly on no Man, not to be Partaker of other Mens Sins, but keep himself pure,* 1 Tim. v. 22. 2 Tim. ii. 2. These Commands also oblige us to see, that these whom we bring into the holy Ministry, be *faithful Men*, according to the best of our Discerning, Men who have pure and honest Ends in their Undertaking ; and not these who aim more to win a Livelihood to themselves, than to win Souls to Christ ; or these who will take unwarrantable Methods to thrust themselves into Parishes, by *courting Patrons, or accepting their Presentations* ; a Practice which no Law requires, a Practice which

manifestly tends to bring a corrupt Ministry into the Church, and which hath already brought in great Divisions and Confusions into this poor Church. If *Patronage* be a *Yoke* and *Grievance* to the Church of God, as we all profess to own, it must surely be a Sin for Men, by their own voluntary Deed, to bring on that Grievance, and to wreath that Yoke about the Church's Neck ; when at the same Time they know they are under no Necessity from the Law to do so, seeing Parishes can be planted otherwise if our Preachers would give Way to it. Our present Situation is so easy by the Act of Parliament 1719, that Patronage can do this Church no Harm without the active Concurrence of a Preacher. Well then, hath the Legislator been so kind as to unfasting the Patronage-Act, and so tender of this Church's Liberties, as to leave her Freedom at her own Choice ; What a Shame will it be in that Case, if her own *Preachers* shall turn her *Oppressors* ? O tell it not in Gath ! &c. But, seeing the plain and free *Warnings* emitted by this and neighbouring *Synods*, do set the Sin and Danger of this Practice in so clear a Light, I need add no more upon it, except my earnest Prayer to God, that he may bless these Means, so as to put a Stop to this most pernicious Practice. *Amen.*

9thly, As we would desire the Welfare of this Church, and prevent her Reproach, let us endeavour as far as possible to get Parishes planted with their *own Consent* and *Good-liking* : For, when this is done against their Will, it frequently hath a woful Issue, Congregations are broken, Ordinances are forsaken, Christ's Flock is dis-

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perfed, and the Ministry is defpifed ; all which very much tend to our Reproach, as well as the Hinderance of the Kingdom of Chrift. Wherefore, my dear Brethren, let us take Heed what we do in this Affair, feeing fo much doth depend upon it.

There is a Controverfy very lately arifen amongft us concerning the Peoples Right to elect their Pastors: Some take it wholly from them, and give it to the Presbytery or Church-representative ; and the Church's Friends are distracted by Writings on both Sides. If I may offer my Opinion, I humbly apprehend the State of the Controverfy is not duly confidered by thofe who handle it. And many of our Differences and Difputes do proceed from our not ftating the Question fo diftinctly and accurately as we fhould ; and, when this is once done, frequently the Debate falls.

The Question then ought not to be ftated generally and confufedly, as, Whether the *People* or the *Presbytery* have the Right of Electing the Pastors of the Church ? Seeing we may fafely grant they both have an Interelt therein, the one without Prejudice to the other. — Neither is the *Question* to be ftated, Whether the *Presbytery* or Church-representative have a Power to elect and ordain Pastors upon fome Occafions, and for fome fpecial Employments and Services, without the Choice and Consent of the People ? As for my Part, I believe they have ; and that thefe Pastors, fo elected, are lawful Pastors of the Catholick Church, and ought to be acknowledged as fuch by the People.

Nor is the Question to be stated, Whether the *Presbytery* hath any Power at all in the Election of Pastors to particular Parishes? No, for it is owned they have a great Power in Conjunction with the Parishes, and ought to preside in the Election. But, if the Question be stated, Whether the *Presbytery* hath the sole Power of Electing, exclusive of the Voice or Consent of the Parishes to which the Pastors are elected? They who espouse that Side of the Question (in my humble Opinion) will have a hard Pull to prove it, either from *Scripture*, *Reason*, or *Fathers*. And, that they may know what they have to do, let the Question be clearly and distinctly stated as it ought to be in a Suitableness to the present Situation of this Church, and then it will run thus: *Quest.*

“ Whether the *Presbytery*, or Church-representative, hath a Right to elect and appoint
 “ Pastors to particular Flocks of Christian People,
 “ without the Call or Consent of these Flocks,
 “ and even when they dissent and reclaim against their Deed? And whether, in such
 “ Cases, the *Presbytery* hath Power to constitute
 “ and fix the spiritual and pastoral Relation betwixt these Pastors and these Flocks, so that
 “ they must necessarily acknowledge them as their
 “ proper Pastors, and receive all Ordinances
 “ from them; yea, be tied to them so much,
 “ that they cannot have Access, without the Allowance of these Pastors, to partake of sealing
 “ Ordinances dispensed by others? So that all these
 “ Christian People, however valuable they be, must
 “ be in Effect excommunicate if they do not receive these Pastors imposed violently upon them.”

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Now, if the Controversy be thus stated among us, (as it certainly ought to be) the *Writers* for the *Presbytery's* Power will find it a difficult Task to instruct and support such a Power from the *Word of God*, *sound Reason*, or the *Practice* of the *Primitive Church*: Nay, I am of the Mind, all the three will be found to unite against them, seeing all of them declare for the great Interest which Christians have in the Choice and Settlement of these who are to be their spiritual Guides, and that they are to be consulted in this important Affair. Our most eminent Divines, both abroad and at home, have, ever since the Reformation, strenuously argued for the *Peoples Right*, against the *Papists* and their *Clergy's imposing Power*, from the *Word of God*, and particularly from *Acts* i. 15, 23, 26. *Acts* vi. 2, 3, 5, 6. *Acts* xiv. 23. whose Arguments I have not yet seen satisfyingly answered either by *Papist* or *Protestant*. But, besides all these, it may satisfy any unbiassed Enquirer, if he but consider the Characters which Christ gives his Flock, that *they hear and know his Voice in his Shepherds*, and do distinguish it from the Voice of false Shepherds, and *will not follow these, but flee from them*, John x. 3, 4, 5. and the Command that is given to all Christians to *try the Spirits*, 1 John iv. 1. and to *beware of false Prophets, which come to them in Sheeps Clothing*, Mat. vii. 15. and to *mark and avoid these who teach unsound Doctrine*, Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Phil. 3. 2. and to *judge of the Doctrine* which is delivered to them by their Teachers, 1 Cor. x. 15. and for doing whereof the *Bereans* are highly commended by the Spirit of

of God, *Acts* xvii. 11. I say, It may satisfy every unprejudiced Person that seriously considers these Scripture-texts, and the Commands given to the Disciples of Christ therein, that the Word of God doth allow a great Interest to all judicious Christians in the Choice of their Pastors; and that it is their unquestionable Right and Privilege to have a *Judgment of Discretion* concerning these Pastors to whom they are bound to commit the Guiding, Edification, and Instruction of their precious Souls: And no Patron, no Heritor, no Body of Men, or Judicatory whatsoever, can deprive the People of that Right and Privilege which God allows to them.

But, granting the Scripture had mentioned nothing of the Peoples Right in this Matter, but had given all Power to the Presbytery (as some would have it) and left them to manage it as they should be answerable to their great Lord and Master: Yet, even in that Case, I think it easy to demonstrate, from the general Rules of the Word, and the Dictates of sound Reason, that *Presbyteries* ought always to exercise their electing and planting Power with the Advice and Consent of the Christian Congregations immediately concerned, and not in Opposition to their declared Inclinations and pressing Requests. I shall mention two plain Scripture-rules which determine me to think so, *viz.* that in *1 Cor. x. 31. Whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* And that in *1 Cor. xiv. 26. Let all Things be done unto Edifying.* Now, Ministers are more concerned to observe these Rules than other Men, seeing their Office is peculiarly designed for advancing the Glory of God, and the Edification of

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of his Church. And, is it not evident to every rational sober Mind, that it is more for the Glory of God, and the Edification of the Church, to settle Pastors in Congregations with their own Consent and Good-liking, than to thrust them in upon them against their Will? When we plant Ministers amongst a People, whose Persons they esteem, and whose Ministry they affect, they will more readily hearken to their *Instructions*, submit to their *Reproofs*, and obey their *Directions*, than they will do theirs against whom they have conceived the strongest Aversion and Prejudice. The Settling of Parishes in a violent Manner doth stop the Success of the Gospel, and defeat the great and valuable Ends of a Gospel-ministry, which are mainly these two; (1.) The Conversion of Sinners, and reconciling them to God, *Acts* xxvi. 18. *2 Cor.* v. 20. (2.) The Perfecting of the Saints, and Edifying of the Body of Christ, *Eph.* iv. 12. Now, how can any of these noble Ends be reached by such Ministers, when either the People do not attend their Ministry at all, or, if they do, yet their Grudges and Prejudices against them do woefully shut their Ears against all their Instructions and Admonitions? O if Gospel-ministers would more closely attend and pursue these great Ends of their Ministry, the Groans of the Oppressed would not so much afflict us, as they are like more and more to do, if God in his tender Mercy prevent not: I grant, *Church-authority* is not to be despised; for God hath clothed his Ministers with spiritual Power and Authority in his Church; But still we are to remember, when we exercise this Power in any Case, we ought to do

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It for *Edification*, and not for *Destruction*, 2 Cor. x. 8. & xiii. 10. We are not to be *Lords over God's Heritage*, to do as we list; nor are we to *exercise any Dominion over their Faith or Consciences*, but we are to promote their Comfort and Joy, 2 Pet. v. 3. 2 Cor. i. 24. The Church's Edification is the great Rule and End of all Church-Power. We see how closely the Apostle Paul kept this Rule in his Eye, in all the Exercise of his Church power and Authority, 2 Cor. xii. 19. *We do all Things, dearly Beloved, for your Edifying.* He regarded the Edification, not only of the Rich and Great, but also of the poorest Saints, and the meanest Members of the Body of Christ: And surely the Edification of such is not below the Consideration of the most eminent Ministers, or the greatest Judicatory of Christ's House. We see what Regard Christ had to his *little Ones*, and what Wrath he threatens against those who offend them, Mat. xviii. 6. Luke xvii. 2.

Well then, my Brethren, let us have a tender Regard to these Scriptures-rules I have mentioned, in all our Actings in Judicatories, and especially with respect to the Settlement of Churches; and if there be any *Act* or *Rule* in this Church, particularly *that* lately made, which hath any Thing in it inconsistent with the foresaid Rules (as indeed there seems to be, according to the Sense now put upon it) I do earnestly wish and pray, That all my Reverend Brethren may resolve upon addressing the Venerable Assembly in the most decent and dutiful Manner, that they may be pleased to rectify it, so as it may better answer the great Ends we ought all to have in

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View, the *Glory of God*, and the *Edification of the Body of Christ*. And this I move without any Design to reflect upon the Authority of the Assembly (which we ought to treat with all due Regard) or to give any Offence: And neither should any take it, seeing there is none of our Courts that pretend to Infallibility; As they have altered, so they still can alter their Acts and Rules when they see good Reason for it. And the Administration we live under (blessed be God) is so mild and gentle, that we have Liberty to address our Superiors, both Civil and Ecclesiastick, concerning what is gravaminous to us; And, why should we not improve our Liberty in addressing both of them, for removing whatever hinders the Advancement of the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, to whose Service we Ministers are peculiarly devoted?

10thly, If we would promote this Church's Welfare, and prevent her Reproach, let us join *Fasting, Weeping and Mourning* together with our Prayers; as we are directed both in the Text and Context, *Joel ii. 12. Let us weep betwixt the Porch and the Altar*, in Sight of all the People, and bewail these Sins and Backslidings, which grieve God, and provoke him to give up this Church to Reproach. And, amongst others of our Sins, we have Cause to confess and lament our Impenitency, and Neglect of observing Days of Fasting and Humiliation for our own Sins, and the Sins of the Land and Church of which we are Members and Office-bearers. Alas, what a bad Token is it! When Judgments are visibly impending over us, that there is so little of an Inclination or Willingness to appoint and keep such Days with our People, for enumerating, confessing and spreading out our hainous and God-provoking Sins before the Lord, such as our Ignorance, Unbelief, Atheism, Unthankfulness, Unfruitfulness, treacherous Dealing, &c. See a more full Enumeration of our Sins in the Postscript of this Discourse.

11thly, If we would Advance the Church's Credit, and avert her Reproach, let us all be careful to *preach* to our People by our *Lives* as well as by our *Lips*

Lips, to confirm our Doctrine in the Pulpit by our Conversation out of it. Let us mind, that a loose Way of living will soon demolish all that is built by the most lively Way of preaching; for our People have Eyes to see how we walk, as well as Ears to hear what we say. Hence it was that the Apostle Paul gave such a weighty Advice to *Timothy* a young Minister, *1 Tim. iv. 12. Be thou an Example of the Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.* And as the Apostle advised others, so he lived himself; observe how he appeals to the *Thessalonians*, among whom he had laboured, concerning the Exactness and Exemplariness of his ministerial Walk, *1 Thess. ii. 10. Ye are Witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:* And this holy and shining Conversation of the Apostle contributed much to the Success of his Doctrine. Alas, *shining Doctrine* without a *shining Walk* will never enlighten nor enliven our Hearers. If, after we have preached against Pride, Passion, Covetousness, Injustice, Intemperance, Lightness, Unchastity, Contention, Uncharitableness, Unmercifulness, Malice, Revenge, &c. we ourselves should be found guilty of any of these Evils; if we be worldly, intemperate, malicious, unjust, contentious, or unmerciful; if we be light or frothy, if any corrupt Communication proceed out of our Mouths; then we just pull down with the one Hand, what we build up with the other. We tempt People to think, we do not ourselves believe, what we would persuade them to believe; that we only talk of these Things because it is our Trade, and we get our Living by it. It is not easy to express the mischievous Influence which Looseness in a Minister's Walk hath upon the Interest of Religion amongst a People; hence it is that the Spirit of God saith to Ministers, *Isa. lii. 11. Be ye clean that bear the Vessels of the Lord.* And Christ saith to his Disciples, who were designed to be Ministers, *Mat. v. 16. Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works.* It adds greatly to the Credit and Prosperity

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rity of a Church, when her Ministers have holy and shining Conversations; whereas it exposeth her to sad Reproach when it is otherwise. *Lord, give not up thy Heritage in Scotland to this Reproach.*

Quest. When may it be said that a Minister's Conversation is of a shining Character? and how shall we attain to it?

Ans. In order thereunto, let us, 1st, Study Meekness, Patience and Peaceableness of Spirit; and, when we meet with Provocations, let us labour to rule our Spirits, and keep Reason upon the Throne; Let us neither be soon angry, nor long angry. To be patient under Reproaches and bad Usage, and ready to forgive Injuries, is such a sweet Christian Disposition, as would very much adorn our Character. That is a noble Advice the Apostle gives, 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. *The Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient; in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.*

2^{dly}, Let us study Justice and Righteousness in all our Dealings with others, even to a Shoe-latchet, that we may be able to appeal to our People, with the Prophet *Samuel, Whom have we injured or wronged?* So doth Paul appeal to the *Thessalonians*, with respect to his just Dealing among them, 1 *Thess.* ii. 10. The least Appearance of Injustice or unfair Dealing in a Minister, is most reproachful to his Character, and exceedingly mars his Success; and therefore the Apostle directs the Man of God to be just, and follow after Righteousness, 1 Tim. vi. 11. Tit. i. 8.

3^{dly}, Let us be clothed with Humility, which is a shining Ornament in a Minister's Conversation. We are not to be puffed up with our Parts or Attainments, or to despise those who fall short of us; but we must be willing to become all Things to all Men, and Servants to every one, for the Good of their Souls: And thus we would resemble our Master, who was meek and lowly, and taught us by his Example to humble ourselves to serve one another. It hath been observed, that God uses to bless the Labours of those of meaner Parts, who

who are humble and diligent, when these of greater Parts, who are lifted up, are blasted.

4thly, *Temperance, Sobriety and Chastity* are very adorning to a Minister's Walk. He ought to have Power over his Appetite, to restrain it as to eating or drinking, and never to be enslaved to any base Lust, *Tit. i. 7, 8. 2 Tim. ii. 22.*

5thly, If we would adorn our Character, let us be *disengaged from the World* as much as may be, that we may attend our spiritual Work of serving God, and winning of Souls, *without Distraction*. Our Eyes should not be dazzled with the glittering Lustre of Gold and Silver, but we ought to shew a generous Contempt of these Things, as those who firmly believe the great and everlasting Things of that World we preach to others, and unto which we press Men to elevate their Minds and Affections. What a Reproach is it to these who preach this Doctrine to others, and live contrary to it themselves?

6thly, Let us study, when we converse with others, to *mix something that is spiritual and edifying*. We are called the *Salt of the Earth*, and therefore ought to season the Places and Companies where we are, with some savoury and useful Discourse; this is much better than *foolish Talking and Jesting, which is not convenient* for these of our Character, *Eph. v. 4.* For a Minister to have nothing of God, of Christ, of Heaven, or of *serious Godliness* in his Mouth, but when he is in the Pulpit, is an Evidence that he is not very zealous to promote the great Ends of his Office, the *Glory of God, and the Salvation of Mens Souls*; for, if he were, *out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth would speak*, and be ready to drop something now and then to the Honour of God, and the Confirmation of these Truths we deliver in Publick.

Thus I have mentioned several Things that would make a Minister's Conversation of a shining Character; which, if studied, would tend very much to promote the Reputation and Welfare of this Church, and to avert her Reproach. And, having said so much to my Brethren of the Ministry, I shall now conclude with

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A Word to the People.

LET me exhort you to join with Ministers in this necessary Work of Weeping and Wrestling for the Church of God, and especially for *his Heritage* in the Land of your Nativity. Tho' the Command in the Text be directed to Ministers, yet elsewhere we find it extended to People of all Ranks, *Psal. cxxii. 6. Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee.* Well then, let me beseech you all to weep, and cry with us, *Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thine Heritage to Reproach.* And with your Tears and Prayers see that ye join your most earnest Endeavours to promote the Credit and Welfare of the Church, according to the Stations wherein God hath set you. 1. Are ye *Magistrates*? Exert yourselves both by your Authority and Example to discourage Vice and Immorality. 2. Are ye *Elders*? See to assist Ministers, by reprovng Sin, and informing against it. 3. Are ye *Teachers of Youth*? Labour to instil the Principles of Religion and Virtue into the young Generation very early, and train them up in the Abhorrence of Vice, and whatever hath a Tendency to it. 4. Are ye *Parents and Heads of Families*? See that *young Ones* be taught both to read and pray; catechise both Children and Servants upon the Sabbath-evening, call them to account what they remember of the Sermons they have heard, perform Family-worship with them in all its Parts: Be careful to reprove Sin, such as Lying, Swearing, Sabbath-breaking, Neglect of Prayer, &c. And, whatever be your Rank or Station in the World, I exhort you to set apart Time for Mourning and Weeping for your own Sins, and the Sins of the Land, which may provoke the Lord to leave us, and give us up to Reproach. Pray for the Ministers which are planted among you; and pray earnestly for a faithful Soul-winning Ministry to be raised up in the Church, and planted in vacant Congregations; and that all Impediments in the Way may be removed, and the In-coming of

a corrupt Ministry prevented. Pray that the Spirit of God may be poured down from on high upon us and all our Endeavours, which would retrieve the Credit of the Church, and avert her Reproach. Amen.

POSTSCRIPT,

Containing an Enumeration of some Sins to be confessed and mourned over, upon Fast-days and other Occasions.

1. **T**HE abounding *Atheism* of many in the Land, both in Heart and Life; the practical *Atheism* of those who live as if there were no God, nor Providence to govern the World; who put the *Creatures*, the *World* and *Self* in God's Room, and ascribe their Mercies to *Fortune*, to their own *Wisdom* and *Industry*, rather than to *God*.

2. The gross Immoralities which abound among us, as Drunkenness, Uncleaness, Lying, Backbiting, Defrauding, profane Swearing, false Swearing in Matters of Commerce, profaning the Lord's Day, by walking and travelling unnecessarily, transporting Goods, and otherwise.

3. Our woful Security in these Evils, and obstinate cleaving to predominant Sins, despising all Reproofs for them, and Warnings to forsake them.

4. The inordinate setting of our Hearts upon earthly Enjoyments and sensual Satisfactions, to the sad Neglect of these Things, wherein our chief Happiness doth consist, viz. the Enjoying of God, and Communion with him.

5. The great Ignorance of God and of Gospel-Truths, which continueth in a Land of such Light. The great Ignorance of Jesus Christ, of his Mediation and Offices, and of the Way of making Use of Christ for Justification and Sanctification, for Strength in Duties, and for Access to and Acceptance with God.

6. The Neglect of the Worship of God in Families and in Secret, and the great Restraining of Prayer before God.

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7. Our Unfruitfulness under the Means of Grace.

8. The Backslidings of all Ranks from God, and leaving their first Love; the great Decay of the Life and Power of Godliness, and of holy and tender Walking, both in Ministers and Professors.

9. The Sloth and Contempt of many, in not attending upon God's holy Ordinances.

10. Our attending Ordinances for the Fashion, and not making them trying Places for meeting with God, and Means of Communion with him.

11. Our contenting ourselves with Man's Teaching, and not seeking after the Teachings and Influences of the Spirit in hearing of the Word.

12. Our sinning away the holy Spirit from Ordinances; our not lamenting for his Withdrawing, nor wrestling for his Return.

13. Our Formality in Prayer, and not making Use of the Intercession of Christ, nor imploying the Assistance of the Spirit in this Duty.

14. Our resting upon an outward Attendance of Ordinances, and a Name to live, without seeking after a Work of Grace and Regeneration in our Souls.

15. Our not valuing the News of redeeming Love which the Gospel brings to us, nor embracing Glorious Christ as offered to us therein.

16. Our not living a Life of Faith upon Christ, nor making continual Use of his meritorious Blood, and imputed Righteousness for our Justification, Sanctification, subduing Sin, performing Duty, Acceptance with God, and Peace of Conscience.

17. Our going about to establish our own Righteousness, by putting our religious Duties, our just Dealing, or moral Honesty, in the Room of Glorious Christ, who alone is the Lord our Righteousness.

18. Our Unfrequency and Sloth in celebrating the Memorials of redeeming Love, and of the Death and Sufferings of our blessed Lord in the holy Supper.

19. The Profanation of the Lord's Table, by the Approach of those who are ignorant, prayerless, or ungodly Livers.

20. Our neglecting solemn Preparation for this near Ap-

Approach, by Self-examination, secret Humiliation and wrestling with God for his Presence, and renewing Covenant with him.

21. Our not keeping up the Impression of sacramental Vows, and of the matchless Love of Christ displayed to us, so as to be thereby constrained to live to him that died for us.

22. Our not imitating the Pattern of the holy Jesus, in his Meekness, Holiness, Self-denial, Mortification to the World, Patience under Wrongs, Thankfulness for Mercies, Diligence in Prayer, Zeal for God's Service, Concern for the Good of others, Willingness to die, and Resignation to God's Will.

23. The Neglect of Masters of Families in instructing their Children and Servants, and using their Authority to suppress Sin amongst them.

24. Our unthankful forgetting of the many signal Deliverances which God hath wrought for this Church and Land; and our unthankful Abuse of the many valuable Mercies we still enjoy.

25. Our perfidious Dealing with God, in breaking both national and personal Covenants; and our Want of Zeal for maintaining Truth, Purity and Piety, in Opposition to abounding Error, Superstition and Profanity.

26. Our Indifferency about the Coming of Christ's Kingdom; our little praying for the Peace and Prosperity of *Jerusalem*; and our minding our own Things, more than the Things of Jesus Christ.

27. The Heaven-daring Attacks made upon the Gospel-revelation, by Infidels among ourselves.

28. Our Impenitency and Insensibleness under spiritual Judgments, and manifold Tokens of God's Anger, such as, withdrawing his Spirit from Ministers and Professors, blasting of Ordinances, dividing us in his Anger, giving us up to spiritual Oppression and Persecution, letting loose a Spirit of Error and Delusion, &c.

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